

THESE ARE EXTERNAL AND WILL BE POSTED TO WEB

**EPA SCHOOL MONITORING INITIATIVE
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

Q: My school is being monitored. Should I be worried?

A: We are monitoring at your school based on information that raised some questions about the quality of the air outdoors. Measuring the levels of toxics in the air around the school will help EPA understand whether that air quality poses any health concerns. We'll let you know what we learn, and what it means for health.

We are monitoring for chemicals that may be harmful if people are exposed to them at high enough levels for a long time – often, over a lifetime. We don't expect to find these chemicals at high enough levels to cause an immediate health hazard, but if we do, we'll let the school and community know, and we'll take action.

Q: How did you select schools for monitoring?

A: The schools selected for monitoring include schools near large industries that are sources of air toxics, and some schools in urban areas, where emissions of air toxics come from a mix of large and small industries, cars, truck, buses and other sources.

We identified schools for monitoring based on information that raised some questions about air quality that merit investigation. That included the best data available to us about air pollution in the vicinity of the school, information about wind direction and speed, results of a computer modeling analysis, results from a recent newspaper analysis, and information from state and local air agencies.

We used all of this information to identify potential schools for monitoring – and then we worked with EPA regional offices and state air agencies to examine results in more detail. In particular, we checked to determine whether the facilities that appeared to be the dominant sources of pollution were still operating. We also checked to find out if the schools are still open. We removed a number of schools from the list based on this information. We also added some schools based on EPA regions' and states' recommendations.

Q: My school was high on the USA Today list. Why aren't you monitoring here?

A: In order to begin monitoring as quickly as possible, EPA is beginning this initiative by monitoring at a subset of about 60 schools. We are focusing first on schools near large industrial plants, along with some schools in urban areas, where emissions of air toxics come from a mix of large and small industries cars, trucks, buses and other sources.

If your school is not on the initial list of schools to be monitored, it does not mean it might not be monitored in the future. We will use what we learn from the initial round of

monitoring to help us determine whether we may need to conduct additional monitoring.

Q: What pollutants will you monitor?

A: The pollutants we monitor will vary by location. We have identified these pollutants using we currently know about what pollutants are being emitted from sources near each school. We will be monitoring for chemicals that are emitted in many areas of the country from sources such as industrial facilities and cars, trucks and buses. These pollutants, which are known as “air toxics,” the *potential* to cause cancer or other significant respiratory or neurological problems if a person is exposed to high enough levels over a long time.

Q: When will monitoring begin?

A: The timing will vary some by school – depending largely on whether existing monitors are available to be relocated to a school or whether EPA must purchase a new monitor (some monitors will have to be manufactured first). If your school is on the initial list for monitoring, monitoring will begin within the next three months. Monitors will be in place for about 60 days, sampling air about 10 times during that period.

Q: Who will do the monitoring?

A: EPA is asking state and local agencies to conduct the monitoring under EPA guidance. EPA will provide monitors for those states that need them, and will pay for analysis of the air quality samples. EPA is redirecting \$2.25 million from the competitive Community-Scale Air Toxics Monitoring grants program for this effort.

Q: When will I be able to see the monitoring results?

The timing will vary some by school – depending largely on whether existing monitors are available to be relocated to a school or whether EPA must purchase a new monitor for the initiative. We anticipate being able to start sharing results within a few weeks after monitoring begins. We’ll share complete results from this phase of monitoring about three months after monitoring begins. Results will be posted on the EPA website at www.epa.gov/schoolair

Q: Why can’t I get results sooner?

There is a lag-time between when monitoring begins and when results are available. Here’s how it works. Experts will collect samples every 6 days over the monitoring period. Each sample will be sent to a lab for analysis. When we receive the results from the lab we then check the results. As soon as we finish checking the results, we will post it on the website at www.epa.gov/schoolair.

Q: What will you do if you find problems? Will you shut down schools?

A: If we find problems, EPA will work with our state and local partners to address them. This effort may include bringing enforcement actions as appropriate. In other instances, we will work with our state and local partners to address the problems. Some problems may be difficult to quickly resolve.

Q: Is 60 days of monitoring enough time to understand whether air poses health concerns?

A: Sixty days is enough to give us a *rough* idea of possible health concerns at a school. If we don't get enough information about possible health concerns during the initial sampling period, we will recommend that monitoring continue for a longer period.

Q: Will any monitoring take place when children are out for the summer? It seems like you might miss an important source of pollution -- cars and buses transporting children to school. How will you address that?

A: You're right that emissions from cars and buses transporting children to schools are important sources of air pollution. We anticipate that most schools will be in session when monitoring begins. We will examine results closely to see if there is a significant drop in mobile source air toxics after school lets out for the summer. If we do, we may consider additional monitoring at those sites when school resumes.

Q: What about pollutants like ozone? Are you monitoring those?

A: Not as part of this initiative. While children are particularly susceptible to its effects, ozone is widely monitored across the country. This monitoring effort is limited to air toxics.

Q: Will you be monitoring indoor air quality?

A: EPA's School Monitoring Initiative does not include indoor air quality monitoring. The monitoring program will measure levels of toxic pollutants in outdoor air near schools, relying on an expansion of EPA's existing ambient air quality air toxics monitoring program.

No comparable air monitoring system exists for measuring indoor air pollutants. Indoor air quality is affected by a wide range of factors unique to each building, such as indoor sources of contaminants; types of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems; building design and structure; operation and maintenance practices; and pollutants that may enter the school from outdoors. Due to the complexity of site-specific conditions, air monitoring has only limited applicability inside of schools.

Q: What can I do to address indoor air quality in schools?

A: Visit EPA's Web site (www.epa.gov/iaq/schools) to learn more about indoor air quality issues in schools. Learn how student performance is affected by indoor air quality, the health effects associated with poor indoor air quality, and no-cost or low-cost solutions to help schools, prevent or solve indoor air quality problems.

Citizens can advocate for healthy school environments in the community. You can work with school and health professionals, parents, and others in your community to raise awareness about indoor air quality, as well as other environmental health issues in schools. As a parent, you can make a powerful case for protecting children's health from environmental risks in schools. Learn more at www.epa.gov/iaq/schools.

Q: What are air toxics?

A: Air toxics, also known as hazardous air pollutants, are pollutants known to, or suspected of, causing cancer and other serious health effects.

Q: Does EPA set air toxics standards?

A: Yes. The Clean Air Act requires EPA to limit emissions of air toxics through a series of industry-specific emissions regulations. Since 1990, the Agency has issued 96 of these regulations, covering 174 categories of industry that are major sources of air toxics emissions. By law, these standards focus on emissions of air toxics, unlike standards for ozone and particle pollution, which set limits on the amount of pollutants allowed in the outdoor air.

More detail: Between 1990 and 2005 emissions of air toxics have declined by 41 percent as a result of EPA regulations and state and local programs. EPA continues to issue regulations to limit air toxics emissions from smaller -- but numerous -- industries such as collision repair shops, dry cleaners, and asphalt roofing manufacturing that often are found close to homes, schools and businesses. EPA also has issued regulations to reduce air toxics emissions from mobile sources such as cars and trucks.